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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 000421

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [ENRG](#) [SENV](#) [UN](#) [ZK](#)
SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: UN PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY CENTER HEAD
DISCUSSES REGIONAL WATER AND ENERGY COOPERATION

Classified By: Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland, 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Miroslav Jenca, Director of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA), met with the Ambassador on March 2 to discuss regional water and energy cooperation and a conference on those issues that will be held in Almaty April 19-21. Jenca said that Kazakhstan played a leadership role on water and energy cooperation in 2008 and has been supportive of UN efforts. Jenca raised concerns about Russia's manipulation of water issues as a lever of political control. He noted that downstream and upstream countries have divergent and very entrenched positions, particularly downstream Uzbekistan and upstream Tajikistan. Tajikistan is determined to build the Rogun dam and may seek Iranian involvement. END SUMMARY.

APRIL WATER AND ENERGY CONFERENCE IN ALMATY

12. (SBU) Miroslav Jenca, UNSYG Special Representative and Director of the Ashgabad-based UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA), told the Ambassador on March 2 that the Center plans to hold a conference in Almaty on April 19-21 to discuss regional approaches to resolving water and energy disputes. Jenca's office chose Almaty as the venue because of support from Kazakhstani Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin, Kazakhstan's moderate position as a peace-maker on these issues, and its convenient location. Jenca's goal is to build a spirit of cooperation to be followed by concrete steps, including commissioning World Bank feasibility studies on large cooperative projects, such as a Kyrgyzstan-to-Afghanistan electricity line, Tajikistan's Rogun dam, and electrical links between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The center is inviting to the conference officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, agriculture, water, and the environment, as well as the presidential administrations, of each of the five Central Asian states.

NAZARBAYEV HAS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE

13. (C) Jenca told the Ambassador that he hoped Kazakhstan

could play a leadership role at the upcoming conference. He noted that President Nazarbayev has played a key role in pressing for water and energy cooperation in 2008 and bringing the Central Asian leaders together at an October summit in Almaty to discuss these issues. According to Jenca, although the European Union's recent Strategy Report for Central Asia deliberately avoided naming a lead country in Central Asia, the understanding is that Kazakhstan is central to this effort. He argued that downstream Kazakhstan's position on water issues is very moderate in comparison to that of downstream Uzbekistan.

RUSSIAN USING PROBLEMS AS A POLITICAL LEVER

14. (C) Jenca maintained that Russia is trying to use regional water and energy issues as a lever to exert political control over the Central Asian states, instead of using its technology and resources to genuinely try to resolve these problems. He said that Tajik President Rahmon resisted Russian demands for 70% Russian ownership of Tajikistan's Rogun hydroelectric dam and told the Russians to get out.⁸ This is why the Russians turned against the project after Russian President Medvedev had earlier announced Russia's intent to play a lead role in it during a 2008 visit to Dushanbe.

15. (C) Jenca also told the Ambassador that the fundamental issue for downstream water users is whether or not they can trust upstream users. Turkmenistan's President Berdimukhamedov, who Jenca said is in (Uzbek President) Karimov's shadow on this issue, has stressed that

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maintaining his country's access to water is a top priority.⁸ Jenca maintained that Tajikistan is determined to continue with the Rogun project, and has expressed a willingness to use its own resources to complete it, if necessary. Jenca does not believe that Tajikistan has sufficient resources to do the job -- which raises the question of possible Iranian involvement.

UN AND WORLD BANK HAVE IMPORTANT ROLES TO PLAY

16. (SBU) According to Jenca, the United Nations, World Bank and other multilateral organizations can and should also play an important role in dealing with these issues. He noted that when the UN invites all five Central Asian countries to forums to discuss these problems, they are likely to come, even if they are not ready to move forward. He said that while it remains unclear to what degree Uzbekistan will accept the outcome of World Bank feasibility studies on water and energy cooperation, Uzbekistan would like to have the UN and World Bank involved in the issues.

FURTHER POSTPONEMENT NOT AN OPTION

17. (SBU) Jenca told the Ambassador that he is well aware of the challenges his Center faces in trying to resolve these issues. He acknowledged that Uzbekistan sees itself as a leader in the region, and is unlikely to accept any solution that does not affirm this position. Jenca also said that he was aware that various donors had already invested large sums of money in trying to resolve water issues without any results.⁸ However, further postponement of trying to deal with the problems is not an option either.

IMPRESSED WITH KAZAKHSTAN

18. (SBU) Jenca told the Ambassador that Kazakhstan's openness to foreign investment and its investments in human capital have given the country a deservedly positive reputation. Jenca, who is a former Slovak diplomat, said that after President Nazarbayev visited Slovakia, the Slovaks implemented a program modeled on Kazakhstan's Bolashak scholarship program, which sends students abroad to study at government expense.

19. (C) COMMENT: UNRCCA was established in Ashgabat because of Turkmenistan,s strong desire to host a regional UN body. When Ambassador Jenca first arrived and opened the center, which had no clear mandate, he considered a number of the region,s problems as too hard to solve. Given the difficult personalities and intractable positions on the water issue, he will likely need more than several UN-hosted conferences. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND